

# INDIVIDUALITY AND ART

HERBERT E.A. FURST

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with best wishes.

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By **HERBERT E. A. FURST.**

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THE FIGHTING Téméraire.

After the Painting by J. M. W. Turner.

*Frontispiece.*

701  
F38

# INDIVIDUALITY AND ART

BY

HERBERT E. A. FURST

WAGNER. Allein die Welt ! Des Menschen Herz und Geist  
Möcht' jeglicher doch was davon erkennen.

FAUST. Ja was man so erkennen heisst !

Goethe's *Faust*, I.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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# I

THE thing accomplished, taken as a matter of course, is accepted, judged, praised, or condemned as if it were a simple fact; its originator, be he king or soldier, statesman or priest, inventor or discoverer, author or artist, is written up, or down, or only about, as if he had done the thing by himself. Buddha and Christ, Dante, Raphael, and Bach, Cæsar, Napoleon, or the seventh Gregory are all credited with achievements; how great, how good, or how significant depends on the point of view; but that they *alone* did whatever they are credited with having done is hardly questioned. And the nearer we get to our own times the greater is the tribute paid to the individual. Curiously enough this belief in, search for, and easy discovery of individuality amongst the common herd (of Herren-

Menschen amongst Herden - Menschen) has become more pronounced with the growth of social consciousness. Society, whilst disallowing the claims of individuals to rule it, has become in an equal measure anxious to honour and exalt individuality. This is no doubt as it should be; but society, bent on protecting itself by a knotted net of anti-individualistic laws and restrictions, has shown thereby a tendency to belittle itself, a latent distrust in its own strength. And yet it ought to be otherwise. Great men, though they leave their stamp on posterity, are themselves at the mercy of circumstance, are in fact products of their times. Christ could not have been born amongst a tribe of Hottentots nor Shakespeare in the tents of Tamerlane; Napoleon had his greatness thrust upon him by an unwittingly willing world, by a, to him, fortunate coincidence of circumstances. Epoch-making men are born in the womb of men-making Epochs. But whilst it is easy enough to point out the man and say, That is the man, such is his height, his girth, and his complexion, such are his deeds and his achievements, it is impossible to seize and weigh each of the innumerable and perhaps



nameless facts which have enabled him to become what he is. Both the individual and his society are the products of circumstance, and circumstance itself the outcome of a myriad causes, most of them apparently trivial and insignificant in themselves and yet of singular significance in their mutual relation.



It is therefore a problem of surpassing interest to choose an accredited achievement and to investigate the soil upon which it has grown; to dig amongst the roots and to allow oneself to be led into obscure corners and bypaths, and to try and discover the conditions out of which that particular achievement has developed. It is one thing to feel vaguely that all things are more or less connected, it is quite another to find and handle a particular concatenation link by link. And though here and there a link may be rusted, and though the links form not one but many chains, and though a lifetime would not suffice to trace these to their beginnings even were it possible, yet I think there is some satisfaction in having found, realised, and named some links of such an actual chain.

## II

*Ex nihilo nihil.* Greek kosmogony allowed at least chaos out of which resulted kosmos, or simply order out of disorder. So that creation meant only a rearrangement—it means perhaps no more to-day: the putting in order is still proceeding. But the human mind that cannot grasp the creation of something out of nothing is equally unsatisfied with an original chaos. Chaos was something, and consequently we demand that this something must owe its origin to something else. We postulate a First cause, a divine creator of some kind. On this postulate, on this assumption without proof all our knowledge is founded. It answers well, for on such sandy foundations the whole glorious edifice of human thought rests; no matter what philosophic surrogate does duty for the people's "God."

We have therefore good and perhaps sufficient reason to accept the originality of "God" as a proved and absolute truth.

There is no originality in man. What we call human creation is analogous to the creation by the "Divine Marshall," as Bacon has it—of kosmos out of chaos. It is a putting in order, it is organising, it is a marshalling of achievements of others. Man begins nothing and he ends nothing. He continues what has been begun for him—and leaves it to be continued by others. We are apt to forget that isolated facts, such as the creation of a world, of an empire, or of a picture, are facts which have suffered artificial insulation, and that in their essence they are not islands but parts of the universe. There is in reality no such thing as a fact. What we call facts are the ships on the ocean of human consciousness. We know nothing of their existence until they top our horizon: they swim into our ken, and begin; swim out of it and end—changing only their aspect according to light and distance. Some of these vessels we board and find them "deeply laden with pretty things," like the child's ship-a-sailing; others hold awful secrets

like the *Flying Dutchman*. But whence they come or whither they are bound—of their real existence, real beginning, real end—we know nothing.

Thus the lonely little crew of humans voyaging through time that is not, and space that never ends, on the good ship "Earth," fables in anxious ignorance of beginnings and ends, of paradise and immortality, of life after death; imagines now, if not heavens of eternal delight or perpetually yawning hell-mouths, at least some sort of bone and brainless being suspended between the sun, the moon, the earth and all the stars without home and purpose; feeling not the ridiculousness of a clod-heavy Hodge or a town-trodden Jones in perpetuity.

If such aspirations be the hope and glory of the crew, what can be said of the officers who spend the best part of their day endeavouring to get outside themselves, to shed their form in order to examine its substance—trusting that a "slight elasticity of matter" will help them to achieve the impossible.

Meanwhile, all we can be sure of is this: that the "Divine Marshall" whom we may

here call the High Admiral of the world's fleet has some plan of campaign; though whether it be a fight against forces or merely a divine game of "patience" is beyond our understanding.

But whatever it is, our "laws of nature" prove that it has rules: that much we do know.

### III

DEAD nations are remembered best by their Art; it would almost seem as if the artists and the poets were the only individuals of a whole race who mattered *sub specie acterni*. As if Hodge and Jones were ephemeral superfluities and Tennyson and Turner the glory of creation. Thoughtlessly speaking, that is true! But Tennyson—to use this poet's name merely for the sake of alliteration—Tennyson and Turner without Hodge and Jones, where would they have been? Now the Tennyson-Turner aspect of the world is so glorious, the Hodge-Jones aspect so inglorious, that the praising of the latter is by no means a work of supererogation: poor relations are not as a rule persons to be acknowledged comfortably in “good” society. We shall perhaps find ourselves compelled to overstate the case of Hodge-Jones in the hope

of securing them thereby their just moiety in the Tennyson-Turner triumph.

For this present purpose, however, we shall leave out Tennyson, because in the nature of things a poet is perhaps more obviously typical than a painter, particularly a modern one. Inversely: a painter is not so obviously influenced by the world of thought outside his Art as the poet. Neither the phases of faith and philosophy necessarily concern him, nor need great events necessarily re-echo in his heart. A poet must rhyme with reason; it is sufficient if the painter have but rhyme, or rhythm. Is not the immortal beauty of Literature its inner significance, and the immortal beauty of Art its surface, and its surface only? The sound of Homer is strange music to our ears—his meaning we comprehend. The Venus of Milo has lost her divinity, but her beauty we understand.

#### IV

ON a wall of one of the rooms in the new Turner wing of the National Gallery—British Art—hangs under glass and frame a painted canvas, a beautiful picture. It represents a sunset, and its principal feature is a sailing vessel and a steam tug. It is not quite so beautiful perhaps as some of the other pictures in the same wing, since it has a definite subject ; it is not like some of the others, pure harmony and rhythm. Hodge and Jones loom in the foreground ; they have not reverently retired, as in those other pictures, leaving the beholder alone with the maker of pictures and the maker of worlds.

On account of this very defect it is more suited to our purpose. The sublimest Art is profaned by description. No words are adequate reproducers of emotion—even in



Literature emotion is rendered most forcibly when left to be divined. The absolute facts underlying pure emotion go so nearly to the roots of our very existence that we can no more explain them than we can explain the miracle of life itself. A little admixture of intellectual interest, of cold reasoning; the conversion of absolute inexplicable truth into everyday relativity is essential to us who would examine the whys and wherefores of things. Hence we become speechless in the presence of the Venus of Milo, of Michelangelo, of Beethoven, whilst we gush over the Medici Venus, Raphael, and Wagner. In the maker of the Venus of Milo, in Michelangelo, in Beethoven, the Godhead speaks to us through human interpreters. The maker of the Medici Venus, Raphael, and Wagner mock the Godhead by their pretended understanding of His Nature. Turner, akin to the first three, is beyond the reach of words in his later works, whilst he is too easily described in his first period. The "Fighting Téméraire" stretches from the *terra firma* of reason into the heavens of inexplicable emotion.

## V

IF Raphael without arms would still have been—as has been said—the greatest painter, it is on the other hand equally conceivable that Byron's poetry was affected by his lameness. (Some dusty professor—if there still is such a thing—might well write a dissertation on such a subject, as for instance: The Clump Foot as it appears in Byron's Poetry; or, remembering Nietzsche's "Carlyle oder der Pessimismus als zurückgetretenes Mittagessen," Gastric Functions in their Relation to Literary Style.) Granted that a *mens sana* may be absolutely dependent on the *corpus sanum*, how can we account for the fact that the greatest minds have most frequently belonged to very indifferent bodies? May not indeed the nature of some momentous decision, or the inimitableness of an artist's manner, be reducible

ultimately to the action or reaction of liver and kidneys. A grotesque statement of the obvious! True! but the obvious is consistently overlooked nowadays that the led may be induced to follow their leader into a jungle of fictitious subtlety. We worship the explicable dialectics of philosophy—we live on the inexplicable mystery of a hen's egg. Nothing that any man ever said or did is more wonderful than the growth of a daisy, or the birth of a butterfly. But call a thing "The miracle of the loaves and fishes," and it is despised as a stupid trick *pour épâter les bourgeois*; call it *die Umwertung aller Werte*, and it becomes philosophy for supermen. We need neither "miracles of loaves and fishes" whilst daisies grow, nor a trans-valuation of all values, until all values have been justly valued.

Therefore we shall seek here not to re-value Turner's "Fighting Téméraire," but to value *all* values of this great picture. We shall not succeed, obviously; but we may possibly reach a somewhat juster valuation not only of this thing, but of many things. We shall certainly be accused of base materialism by the rampant idealists who imagine that materialism, that

beautiful plant which has taken many centuries to burst into flower and which has scarcely yet emerged from the long night of prejudice into "God's" sun that shines for all, has already withered; who believe not that the proud agnosticism of Huxley's calibre is the humility of true idealism. With this conviction firmly rooted in us we will approach this great work of Turner's with a dissecting-knife; we will make it render up the secrets of its body; mayhap that we shall thereby kill its soul. And yet it seems to me that when all the dissecting-knives of humanity have done their work conscientiously and well and for another thousand years, those who come after us may have learnt more about the *soul* of the world than the most infatuated anti-materialists can dream of in their most soulfully transcendental transportations.

## VI

IN the preceding chapter I spoke of a picture as possessing a soul. I ought not to have done so. The thing is a word of unknown origin, of uncertain etymology, meaning almost anything that is baseless, fabricless, substanceless. Nuttall's three-and-sixpenny knowledge—potted brains of more than twenty centuries—explains that the soul is “the spiritual part of man”; and further, that “spiritual” means “of the nature of spirit,” whilst “spirit,” still according to the same authority, is simply “spiritual substance or being,”—a vicious circle.

Denn eben wo Begriffe fehlen,  
Da stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein.

Soul is the prop and mainstay of all spiritualists, *i.e.* all those who despise “sense.”

With characteristic modesty they claim the sole ownership in souls; but of a truth, like the aboriginal American, I believe that all things have souls: donkeys and daisies, roses and rocks, mists and mountains, and pictures above all! Pictures, in fact, like books and music, are essentially *naked* souls. Oscar Wilde knew it: he tried to wrap the nakedness of his own poor soul in the leaves of his *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Oscar Wilde knew the great secret of pictorial art,—that pictures never look the same to each and every one, that pictures change their moods even on different days. Truly the soul of a picture, naked, defenceless, is at the mercy of the beholder. Whistler's soul is as truly on his canvas as Schubert's is in his songs and Shakespeare's in his writings.

The "*naked* soul" which the perfected work possesses is the thing which links the body-clothed soul of its author with the armoured soul of the beholder.

But just as no soul can manifest itself without the support of a body, so must the naked soul of a picture cling to a medium of support, *i.e.* to canvas and pigment; so must it appear

and appeal in an attitude decreed by convention, chance and circumstance, design and colour. Thus heavily fettered it pleads, and pleading links the author with the beholder.

And with this congruously vague and contradictory acknowledgment of the soul we may fitly drop this ghostly subject.

## VII

IT is not too much to say the "Fighting Téméraire" is Turner's only really popular picture. It is the only one that appeals to *every* visitor, even every stray visitor to the Turner Gallery. It makes this wide appeal not because of its author, but in spite of him. It is because there is less of Turner and more of Hodge and Jones in this picture! Real picture-lovers can see at any time other works of his—as fine or better—being passed by with shakings of heads or shrugs of shoulders at most—often not even that. But what would one have—"Hearts of Oak," by Jingo!

Turner appears to have been as patriotic as any Philistine; he went down to Portsmouth in 1805 to witness the return of the Fleet from Trafalgar. As, however, he was always "half a sailor at heart," and a painter to boot, it may



have been as much his love of the ships and his art as the love of his country that prompted this excursion.

As a patriotic poet-philosopher, Ruskin, his Pontifex maximus, calls this picture "the noblest that in an English National Gallery could be." "Take it all in all, a ship of the line is the most honourable thing that man, as gregarious animal, has ever produced. By himself unhelped he can do better things than ships of the line; he can make poems and pictures and other such concentration of what is best in him. But as a being living in flocks, and hammering out, with alternate strokes and mutual agreement, what is necessary for him in those flocks, to get or produce, the ship of the line is his first work." Personally, I have a greater regard for the "Union Postale Universelle," which is after all a more really honourable product of that gregarious animal. ". . . Those sides that were wet with the long rivulets of English life-blood, like press planks at vintage, gleaming goodly crimson down the cast and clash of the washing foam—those pale masts that stayed themselves up against war-ruin. . . ." thus Ruskin. Now a warship is

essentially a sort of compound national policeman,<sup>1</sup> the deeds of which, if more picturesque, are no more courageous than the deeds of a city policeman who may be attacked in the slums of London by a gang of "roughs." But when the policeman's English life-blood trickles down his "sides" in the dim light of a befogged street lamp we somehow do not think of likening it to anything so harmlessly picturesque as "vintage gleaming goodly crimson." The mention of a policeman in this conjunction is not even far-fetched. According to W. W. Hale White's Report on the "Téméraire" drawn up for Ruskin and given in Cook's handbook : The Chatham "Téméraire" (*i.e.* Turner's, not the old French battleship) was fitted at Plymouth for a prison-ship in 1812. If this be true, the "Fighting Téméraire" saw very little "fighting," compared with its long life of disgrace as a prison hulk ; appears rather as a habitual criminal redeemed by a medal and

<sup>1</sup> This view of the armies and navies of the world is confirmed by Sir Edward Grey, who, on Monday, March 13, 1911, in his defence of increased armaments, said : "Armies and navies would remain, no doubt, but they would remain not in rivalry with each other, but as the *police force* of the world." Sir Edward Grey makes the navy an international instead of a national police force.

clasp in active service. Even before its hour of crowning glory the “ ‘Téméraire’s’ name had for most people an unpleasant ring about it.” “The shadow of a terrible tragedy,” says Mr. Edward Fraser,<sup>1</sup> “rested just then over the name ‘Téméraire.’ The public had not yet got over the shock with which, barely two years before, the whole country had learnt that the crew of one of the flagships of the Channel Fleet, while lying in Bantry Bay, had mutinied and offered violence to their admiral and officers, using ugly threats and proposing to point guns loaded with grape-shot to sweep the quarter-deck. Nor had people forgotten the grim sequel, the relentless severity of the retribution that fell on the ringleaders, how eleven of the ‘Téméraire’s’ men had been hanged at the yard-arm, two flogged through the Fleet at Spithead, receiving two hundred lashes each, seven sent to the hulks for life.” “Military and naval discipline<sup>2</sup> was maintained by a savage use of the lash. When we inflict two or three dozen strokes upon a criminal, we deem the punishment sufficiently sharp. . . . A

<sup>1</sup> *Famous Fighters of the Fleet*. Macmillan, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie, *The XIXth Century*. Nelson, 1880.

sailor was doomed often for a slight offence to such punishment as five hundred lashes. The men who applied the torture were changed at short intervals lest the punishment should be at all mitigated by their fatigue." "To man these ships, etc.," says Mr. John Ashton,<sup>1</sup> "some 100,000 men were needful; and *as they would not come of their own will*, they must be taken *vi et armis*." And further: "Men thus obtained could scarcely be expected to be contented with their lot, and therefore we are not surprised to hear of more than one mutiny—the marvel is there were so few." So much for this "being living in flocks and hammering out, with alternate strokes and mutual agreement, what is necessary for him." "Never more," sings Ruskin, "never more shall sunset lay golden robe on her, nor starlight tremble on the waves that part at her gliding. Perhaps where the low gate opens to some cottage garden, the tired traveller may ask, idly, why the moss grows so green on its rugged wood; and even the sailor's child may not answer nor know that the night dew lies deep in the warrens of the wood of the old 'Téméraire.'"

<sup>1</sup> *The Dawn of the Nineteenth Century in England*, p. 405.

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And perhaps the inquiring cynic "may come across a church within a stone's throw of where the final scene in the 'Téméraire's' career was enacted—St. Paul's, Globe Street, Rotherhithe—in which the altar, altar rails, and sanctuary chairs are all made of heart of oak carved from the frame timbers of the 'Fighting Téméraire.'"<sup>1</sup> And perhaps the inquiring cynic may fall a-musing, may hear the groans and the moans of the "Téméraire's" prisoners, flogged for slight offences, suffering and dying without proper food and care, fed on "junk or old horse," or weevil-hollowed biscuits, and hanged for uttering ugly threats!

"To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?"

"'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so."

It were so indeed; for whether we consider the baseness or the glory of an aspect depends on our temperament. Such musings come with greater force and more relevancy from the things themselves, from Yorick's Skull or from "every hyacinth the garden wears"; they need not the interpretation of a picture.

<sup>1</sup> Fraser, *Famous Fighters*, p. 285.

## VIII

THOSE who imagine this the view of an idle detractor of Turner's greatness will be ready with the question, But does not Ruskin's description faithfully reproduce the painter-poet's own first thoughts? To which we must in truth and fairness answer, Hardly his first thoughts, but possibly his afterthoughts. As Ruskin weaves his sentiment round the picture, so did Turner weave his poetry around Nature, or rather circumstance. For it was on an August evening that Turner—in company with Clarkson Stanfield and others—saw the actual scene he here represents, the “Fighting Téméraire” tugged to her last berth. She is coming up river, actually on a spot between Blackwall and Greenwich Hospital, “with the Summer setting sun astern of her in the North-North-West.”<sup>1</sup> The only liberty Turner has

<sup>1</sup> Fraser, *Famous Fighters*, p. 215, quoting Mr. R. C. Leslie from the *Athenæum*.

taken is the omission of one of the steam tugs and the addition of the rigged masts. The subject was obvious! It must have suggested itself to every one of Turner's company, though only Stanfield is reported to have given utterance to the thought. But the sentimentalist will argue, Surely it needed a Turner to make a picture of it. To which the cynic's relentless reply must be, Since when has the subject-matter of a picture been a criterion of its excellence? Clarkson Stanfield, the painter of "Trafalgar," could himself have made a popular picture out of so obvious a subject.

To begin with, a sunset in itself is a powerful stimulant of sentiment; it counts its worshippers by millions, as compared with the tens who appreciate the beauty of the sun in its noonday glory. I do not know why Thornbury calls the introduction of scarlet into his skies—"when he wished to indicate death or ruin"—"one of Turner's favourite *Subtleties*," a colour which is commonly used for danger-signals all over the world. Sentiment has a knack of confusing cause and effect—to infer all sorts of psychical instead of physical



motives. One of these sentimental critics speaks even of a *waning* moon in this picture. At any rate, the more one dwells on the scarlet, comparing the picture to "a great flame-coloured Mexican cactus," or speaks of "water, red as with the blood of past battles," as Thornbury does, the less tribute one pays to Turner's genius. Especially that scarlet streak above the sun! Here is its origin, according to Thornbury. "The picture of the 'Téméraire' was placed satisfactorily to Mr. Turner, and immediately over it was a picture by Geddes, A.R.A.—'A Lady and Children.'<sup>1</sup> Geddes was delighted with the splendour and brilliancy of Turner's picture; but at the same time he saw at a glance that its splendour and brilliancy would entirely distract the spectator's attention from his own picture above, and that he must do something to make his picture more attractive, and share in the vividness or brilliancy of colour with Turner's picture beneath. So he resolved to repaint the floor of his picture, which was a plain, quiet colour,

<sup>1</sup> "No. 36. Portraits of the Daughters of George Arbuthnot, Esq., a Group in the Costume of the Time of Charles I." R.A. Catalogue of 1839. Turner's picture was No. 49.



and make it more attractive to the spectator's eye; accordingly, he resolved to paint in a showy Turkey carpet." (The crudity of this period of art could not be more delightfully illustrated.) "To accomplish this, he first painted the whole ground of his picture with a flat, bright tint of vermilion, as a groundwork for the pattern of the carpet to be painted, and then returned to an adjoining room to complete another picture he was painting on or before the opening of the Exhibition. Turner was also in an adjoining room, touching up or varnishing another of his pictures. After a while he returned to look at his '*Téméraire*,' when, in an instant, his eyes were attracted up to this new mass of bright vermilion of Geddes's picture. He was overheard to exclaim, 'Oh, oh, Mr. Geddes!' and immediately ran for his palette and brushes from the adjacent apartment. Immediately he cast a sly look first at Mr. Geddes's picture and then at his own; after which, taking his palette knife charged full of vermilion, he passed it right across the picture. Then, stepping back, with another sly look at both pictures, another palette knife was charged with orange colour,

then another with yellow and so on, until he was satisfied that he had brought his picture up to the necessary brilliancy to contend with the bright vermilion ground above him in Geddes's picture."

One marvels what would have become of the "Fighting Téméraire" if Geddes had painted his carpet emerald green!

At any rate, this makes all intentional symbolism, and conscious suggestions of intellectual values as a test of real great art very suspicious.

As Ruskin himself elsewhere remarks: "I say he *thinks* this, and *introduces* that; but strictly speaking he does not think at all. If he thought, he would instantly go wrong; it is only the clumsy uninventive artist who thinks!"

Half the opinions expressed on the subject of art would not be uttered at all if the fundamental truth contained in that sentence were always remembered.

Turner, of all painters, spoilt more pictures with his "thought" than with his brush, with his "Carthages" and his "Fallacies of Hope," and with the other records of his tenebrous,

## VIII INDIVIDUALITY AND ART 29

poetical half-consciousness. The "Fighting Téméraire" is *popular* on account of the ships and its flaring "subtlety" of colour; it is *great* because of the harmony of its illusion—because of its technical achievement. But that is another question which shall not be pursued here. In valuing this great picture let us then not forget that Nature herself came to Turner's assistance. Wind and wave tossed, with the masts at acute angles to the horizon, steeped in the pallor of a wintry blast, or seen against the russet lowering of a thunder-cloud, the picture would have lost that stately and dignified aspect which we demand from the greatest works as from the greatest minds. It was Nature certainly, and wearing her British cloak, that assisted him; for it is the damp northern, the typical English aspect which is beautiful beyond speech. In countries where the "dawn comes up like thunder," where the dusk goes down with similar *éclat*, Turner could not have trained his eye to distinguish such tender transitions of colour as he here represents with overwhelming mastery.

And now, having cleared the way for

Hodge and Jones, let us proceed to discover the human elements which helped to create this picture, and which are generally hidden below such impersonal words as chance, accident, environment, and circumstance.

## IX

MERE chance brought the great artist face to face with this great subject. We have already seen that it happened whilst Turner was going down river in the congenial company of brother artists, "on one of these holiday excursions in which he so delighted, probably to end with whitebait and champagne at Greenwich."

Mere chance started the "Fighting Téméraire" on her last journey, and timed her to meet Turner's eye on the same evening. Hodge and Jones with Turner in the boat, Hodge and Jones, too, at helm and engine of the steam tug. A slight delay on one side or the other, and the world would have lost one of the greatest works of pictorial art. Truly an overwhelming responsibility rests upon the shoulders of Hodge and Jones, bearable only

because borne from birth, and thus become natural and not worthy of thought. Not worthy of thought? But may not there lie hidden the key to the mystery of life? Whilst we, each of us, are following our own little paths and byways, some to riches and obscurity, some to fame and poverty, others to individual destruction, all to personal death, may we not be following a predestined path, like shuttles through the web of that grand pattern in the "garment of God"? Who knows. Does the prudent honey bee, anxiously gathering and laying up stores, know that it helped to bring a rose to life, gloriously, carelessly spreading its petals, beautiful beyond the imagination of honey—aye! or money—makers?

It was Turner's nature to make the best of chance. We hear little of any deliberately adopted plan in his life. He was never a schemer. Unless we are misled by his biographers, he saw in this world only an accumulation of pictorial possibilities; on that point he was clear and definite, on every other point his mind seems to have been more or less obscured.

As the "Fighting Téméraire" bore down

upon the artist's boat, the pictorial possibilities excited his brain through his eyes. Here were colour, design, composition ; here was a world of pictorial delight ; here was, if ever, a subject ready made ; and as his grey eyes dwelt upon it, there would rise out of the pallor of the sky beyond a mighty shadow. The " Corsican Scoundrel " now a memory, a powerless substanceless past. Thank God ! Thank Nelson ! Thank—amongst others too—the " *Téméraire* " ! It is against human nature to expect a child to kiss the rod which has helped to make him a man. It was natural that Napoleon, whose good done to mankind so much outweighs the evil he did to men—it was natural that he should be hated. Hence, perhaps, the deepening of the pathos in Turner's " *Téméraire* ."

Nevertheless, it is not pathos which makes a good picture. In this particular case it is an exceedingly fine picture which has lent itself to pathos, not wholly nor even necessarily connected with it.

Says Thornbury : " Turner, however, looked at her not as an old friend going to the grave, but as an old warrior going to his rest ; and

to celebrate its grand apotheosis he turned the sky and earth into a gory battlefield; and so in gorgeous sunset she moves in pomp to her burial. In the painter's eyes she then was no longer the pale ghost of her former self, but a warship moving through the sulphurous flame at Trafalgar, with the blood oozing through her planks as the wine pours from the wine-press at vintage time. He knew, when he painted this picture, that he should touch the heart of England, because his own heart was touched as he painted it."

And then he goes on: "Had I not so often come unexpectedly upon subtle and underlying thoughts in Turner's works I should have been inclined to doubt that the painter, in introducing the tug, meant to symbolise the rise of steam power and the downfall of wooden ship. *Yet, though I think he merely painted what he saw*, I am not sure that he had not this occult meaning also. His mind was quick and deep; he generally saw all sides of a thought, and all that could be done with it. Besides, we know from several of his pictures that he had a sublime idea of the power of steam."



Now these two paragraphs contain statements which either rest on mere assumption, or are demonstrably untrue.

Thornbury thinks that "he merely painted what he saw"; and yet he also thinks that he saw an old warrior going to his rest, and at the same time a warship moving through sulphurous flame at Trafalgar. Moreover, in "painting what he saw" he meant to "symbolise." Thornbury, like most writers, presupposes and supposes generally a great deal more than painters intend. Painters seem to have very little conscious intention at all; what there is of it may be explained frequently by a simple desire to "play" or to "shine" or to "argue" or to make money. One must, however, remember that the majority of artists are quite ordinary people, a little more emotional perhaps than others, more impressionable; more anxious to *be* and to *enjoy* than to *have* and to *hold*—in short, more feminine than masculine. The great artists—naturally few and rare and tainted, if one likes to call it so, with the same qualities as the lesser men—have yet no better understanding of their own intentions.

Nevertheless, there can be, and generally

is, a mine of meaning in every work of art, as there is in every work of Nature ; but that is no more necessarily the artist's conscious concern than it is Nature's. In Helmholtz's words: "In poetry as in every other art the essential thing is to make the material of art, be it words, or music, or colour, the direct vehicle of an idea. In a perfect work of art the idea must be present, dominating the whole *almost unknown* to the *poet himself*, not as the result of a long intellectual process, but as inspired by a direct intuition of the inner eye, or by an outburst of excited feeling."<sup>1</sup>

Everything is exactly as great, as good, as deep, or as shallow as we think it is; "the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing." No one was more surprised at Ruskin's interpretation of Turner's "meaning" than the artist himself.

According to Thornbury, Turner "merely painted what he saw." This is manifestly not true. We know for an absolute fact that he saw *two* steam tugs, not one only ; and we can be almost certain that he never saw any masts at all. Mr. Castle, the shipbroker, whose

<sup>1</sup> Helmholtz, *On Goethe's Scientific Researches*.

firm broke up the "Fighting Téméraire," tells me that his grandfather, who was present when the ship came in, always used to point out that the artist had taken a great liberty by introducing masts, which were not really there.

## X

AND yet Turner merely painted what he saw "by a direct intuition of the inner eye." Turner, after all, was a poet, and as such *splendide mendax*, self-confessed. When some one had written these words on the frame of his "Bay of Baiae," because "half the scene was sheer invention," Turner only observed with a smile that all poets were liars. He claimed naturally, *i.e. qua* artist, the rank of a poet, and arrogated to himself as his divine right the exercise of poetic licence, which is the licence to say as much or as little as suited his purpose. On this licence, and on the dexterity in using it, rests the sole claim to individual achievement in art. The maker—and poets of all kinds are essentially "makers"—needs a supply of raw material; an idea, a thing seen, and this comes to him from

without ; he makes according to certain rules gained by him likewise from without ; he has individually only the power to add or subtract, to select that which he considers worth "saying," and this power alone comes from within !

No one will deny that the principal raw materials supplied from without were in this case the warship and the steam tug. But how many would think of the nations and generations which had to come and go, to discover and invent, to labour and evolve, so that Turner might succeed in painting this beautiful picture. Generations of slaves, goaded by whip-lashes, driven by hunger and fear ; generations, too, of inventors and discoverers, impelled by the love of fame, ambition, or money ; unforeseen causes (such as sudden raids and invasions) producing unlooked-for effects, commercial intercourse of nations—now all forgotten or scarcely remembered, yet glorified in this same work of art.

Perhaps, indeed, that is the only meaning of life : the achievement of "Beauty" lasting a moment, a century, a thousand years ; the shaping of a certain circumscribed chaos into a certain circumscribed kosmos. Whether it

be better to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, or to make a thing of beauty a work of art—who shall say?

“By himself unhelped he can do better things than ships of the line; he can make poems and pictures and other such concentration of what is best in him.”

Ruskin at any rate had no doubt as to what is best in man; but he says, “by himself, unhelped.”

Never yet was a being created, who could do anything “by himself unhelped.”

Looking at the bows of the beautiful ship as we see it painted, can we count the generations who helped to shape them. A shipwright in '98 by himself unaided? Who guided the hand of the designer; what plans had he to work upon? As we look back through the ages we see individuals “like grasshoppers for multitude” working and thinking, making and improving ship after ship, design after design. Tree trunks found floating in a river are hollowed, rude coracles are plaited, skins are made into bladder raft; the tools improve; thin wood is joined together, oars and rudders are invented, then mast and sail. But the

ever-progressing mind adds—not satisfied—sail to sail, mast to mast, deck to deck, till at last in steady evolution the beautiful Dutch ships and their English descendants appear.

For the “Fighting Téméraire” *is* a beautiful ship of fine proportions and graceful curves; slightly fantastic of aspect, as is the nature of martial things; and through such things as her beautiful “scalloped” bow, figurehead, and gallery, closely related to Art,—as again is the nature of martial things, proved by the existence, even in primitive ages, of “war-paint,” “the war dance,” “the battle-song,” and the decorated arms themselves. So long as war remained intimately connected with the arts there was every reason for the continuance of war. Beautiful implements and machinery of war are a proof that war was the pride of humanity and deserving the homage of art, even as the Church and womanhood. War in the days of hand-to-hand fights was a glorious and inspiring occupation, a delight of adolescence generally in individuals and in nations. In those days war had all the characteristics of adolescence,—its courage, pride, impetuosity, generosity, cruelty, and sensuality. That is

why knights were gorgeously apparelled ; their shields inlaid with gold ; their coats emblazoned ; their blades damascened ; their helmets plumed. Soldiers in times of peace to this day preserve gorgeous colours belonging to bygone ages. But since warships have become a complex monstrosity of concrete mathematics, and the enemy himself a mathematical problem, uniforms have become drab ("khaki" is the horrible word), and the warships are built on strictly scientific principles, with no eye to lines of beauty or playful decorative effects. Warships, cannon, and rifle are now strictly scientific and ugly. All things that ought not to be—such as disease, decrepitude, poverty, crime, ill-made clothes, badly built houses, incompetent daubs, factory districts, prisons and gallows, warships and guns—are ugly. I defy the Turners of to-day to build a beautiful picture on the sentiment of a modern "Dreadnought," unless indeed it be the breaking up of the last warship !

Compared with the old "wooden walls of England" the steam tug, a merely useful contrivance, looks uninteresting, as all merely useful things do.



But again, Turner was indebted to his epoch, inasmuch as the funnels of the time were much longer and slimmer than to-day, inviting comparison with the slender wooden masts of the other vessel; and indeed in those early days a yard-arm with sail was sometimes affixed to the funnel itself. Now a great part of the dramatic interest of this picture rests on the dissimilar similarity of the funnel and the masts, as one might say that apish ugliness sets off human beauty. Twenty or thirty years later Turner would have found two vessels, one an ironclad mathematical infernal machine, the other a sort of mechanical mule of bulldog-like proportions; a tug without the paddles, which at least preserve the likeness to a living organism by making the means of locomotion apparent, incidentally churning the water into a delightful sparkle of glittering light.

## XI

THE difference in the form of the objects represented at one period or another is, however, unimportant in comparison with the enormous difference in the rendering of the "thing seen."

Turner, to-day, is unthinkable, because he would have to base his conception on the Turner that was—himself. One cannot see a *modern* landscape to-day without tracing it back somehow through Turner to the Old Masters. But it is outside the scope of this essay to substantiate this affirmation.

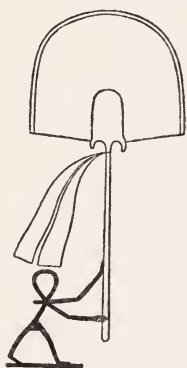
An inquiry into the conception of such a picture as the "Téméraire" at any time before Turner does, however, bear on the question, how much Turner owes to himself, and how much to the past—artistically.

It is, for instance, within the bounds of possibility that the great Queen Hatchepsut might have had the breaking up of one of

her magnificent war galleys painted. The "Objects" in such a picture would have been different in form; but sun, sea, and atmosphere, if different, would only have shown differences of degree in nature. How would a Turner of the XVIIIth Dynasty have treated the subject? The Egyptians of Hatchepsut's reign could draw magnificently; they possessed and used, in addition, brilliant pigments, a mineral red and blue, a vegetable yellow, a green, also black, and a white. Technically, therefore, they were not badly equipped. How would they manage the execution? The water they would have symbolised by zigzag lines. The foreshortening of the vessel would have mystified their public completely, as it would hide the structural form of the ship; a side view showing all the masts and rigging would have been the only permissible way of reproducing the ship, which would be shown not on but above the water-line. The sun being the deity would have been represented possibly as shedding the blessing of its rays with open hands.<sup>1</sup> To tell the Egyptian public what

<sup>1</sup> Compare Perrot and Chipiez, *The Adoration of the Solar Disc*, vol. ii. p. 6, fig. 2.

the subject meant—although numberless human figures, perhaps dragging the boat along the shore and characterised in every action, would be represented—the sky would have been replaced by an elaborate description in hieroglyphic symbols; symbols of such enormous and significant vitality, that one or the other



of the hieroglyphic signs would “develop” legs and arms, and would appear to be dropping out of the “text” in its eagerness to be regarded as part of the picture.

An Assyrian Turner might have fared slightly worse, for their “whole palette consisted of some five or six colours, and their composition was so simple that no attempt to produce an appearance of reality could have been successful. . . . Taken altogether, the painting of Mesopotamia was purely decorative: its ornamental purpose was never for a moment lost sight of, and the forms it borrowed from the organic world always had a peculiar character.”<sup>1</sup> Clearly, then, there was no room

<sup>1</sup> Perrot and Chipiez, *Assyrian Art*.

in Egypt or Mesopotamia for the Turner-esque mind.

It would be a pleasing fancy to imagine a Greek or a Roman Turner. We know a great deal of Greek and Roman painting—from literature; we know extremely little from the pictures themselves. Now it is practically impossible to convey anything like a true representation of a picture through the written word; the finer in fact the picture the less is it describable. Pages of descriptions of ancient Art have quite a modern “ring” about them. “Not only did the ancients anxiously strive to discover and observe the harmonic proportions of colours (*harmogé*), but they also had a fine eye for the quantity of light which the picture should, on the whole, maintain for unity in the general effect of light; this was the tonos or splendour, which Apelles promoted by a thinly dissolved black (*tenue atramentum*), therefore an azure colour, which at the same time protected the picture and mellowed the sharpness of the colours.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, when we hear of Protogenes’s best picture, “The Ship Paralus with the Ammonian Trireme,” we might be

<sup>1</sup> Müller, *Ancient Art and its Remains*, p. 369.

tempted to think of Van de Velde ; or when we learn that Ludius, in the time of Augustus, painted, amongst other landscapes, "canals, sea-ports, and marine views," we may imagine him to have been something like a Claude Vernet or possibly even a Turner. Against such speculation, however, we must remember that "the mysterious boding twilight of spirit which the landscape breathes into us must have seemed to the ancients, from their tendency of mind, incapable of artistic development ; their landscapes, therefore, were generally conceived rather in a playful manner than with earnestness and feeling. . . ." Besides, "down to the latest period . . . it remained a principle and characteristic of Greek Art to introduce personally, in human form, the place of action, the internal motives to it, and the promoting or obstructing circumstances, and on the other hand, to treat the external appearance of nature as compendiously as possible, almost only as the attribute of these forms." <sup>1</sup>

By completely inverting these principles we get somewhere near Turner's conception of treating his subject ; and it follows that if the state-

<sup>1</sup> Müller's *Remains*. Compare also the *Odysseus Landscapes*.

ment above is correct and true, the Turneresque mind could not have existed in ancient times.

To go carefully into all these very interesting matters would necessitate the filling of many volumes : we can here only take a cursory glance at general tendencies and developments.

When the great god Pan was stunned by Christian blows, he remained unconscious for a thousand years. The pipe upon which he had played his poems of earthly joys in sounding majors was wrenched from him by long-frocked priests, who after much stopping and damping converted it to an instrument for hymnal praise of the untasted joys of heaven—melodies naturally adapted to the resignation of the minor keys. Christian Art, at first tolerated in the form of Classic Art scantily disguised, then cursed, then used as a welcome snare to entrap barbarians,<sup>1</sup> was compelled to walk below the gilded vault of heaven and behind the crucifix in heavy garments encrusted with gold and many-coloured gems,<sup>2</sup> an unnatural and depressing

<sup>1</sup> See Guizot's *History of Civilisation in Europe*.

<sup>2</sup> "Denn alle mittelalterliche Maltechniken haben ihren Ursprung in der byzantinischen; diese selbst war aus der spätrömischen entstanden und hatte sich durch Vorliebe für Pracht und Reichtum bei der Darstellung der heiligen Bilder nach der kunstgewerblichen



sight. Hence we find nothing even distantly akin to the Turneresque mind, until the great god Pan awoke once more after the twelfth century. But Lord! (as Pepys used to say) how stiff had he become from his long sleep. Instead of Dionysian dancers, supple nymphs, and rude satyrs, men and women void of natural beauty of form, stiff and awkward in their monkish disguise, walked diffidently through streets and places awry with strange architecture, and through landscapes convulsed with wonder. Let us, however, carefully note that in Boccaccio's eyes Giotto represented things not only so that they resembled nature, but that "they seemed to be the thing itself." Apelles and Parrhasius might well have wept to see how low beneath their ideals this art had fallen; and yet, in its crude eagerness, in its parched thirst for the fresh springs of life there was something new, something that was brought into being through the death of the Nazarene upon His Cross. With the ancients art had meant a mutation of mind into body; with the Christians it became the mutation of body into mind.

Seite hin so sehr entwickelt, dass die Bilder oft mehr aus Edelmetallen und kostbaren Steinen bestanden als aus Malerei."—*Quellen und Technik der Fresko- Öl- und Temperamalerei des Mittelalters.*



## XII

NEITHER St. Francis's nature love, with its subsequent Gothic revival, nor yet the Early Renaissance, child of a curious marriage between Christianised Psyche and untrammelled and unrepenting Eros, brought forth immediately that conception of nature which we associate with the landscape-painter's mind. The appearance of landscape in a picture does not necessarily make the picture a landscape. An incident represented as happening out of doors would naturally have some sort of landscape surrounding. The beginning of the Renaissance means the birth of the inquiring spirit; humanity began to look upon this world with curiosity. At first this was a curiosity about itself, next a curiosity about this "self's" earthly habitations: in terms of pictorial art this means the study of the human form and

the study of perspective—in its widest sense. Hence the appearance of landscape at a very early age, represented as it is with considerable skill by Lucas Moser in his great altar-piece at Tiefenbronn, painted anno 1431. In such a sense Van Eyck and earlier miniaturists before him were able landscape-painters.

It is only when the landscape predominates, not necessarily to the total exclusion of human interest, that a picture becomes a real landscape, and amongst such Altdorfer's pictures are probably the earliest landscapes pure and simple. Nevertheless it may be argued perfectly legitimately that a picture which aims merely at the faithful representation of inanimate nature is not the highest form of landscape painting; that indeed a landscape picture requires something more than mere imitation, namely, the expression of a mood. The picture under such conditions becomes, as it were, an interpreter of human feelings, establishes a relation between the human element and inanimate nature, or between the painter himself and nature. We find the awakening of this kind of landscape in Albrecht Altdorfer too, and shall presently notice one of his pictures expressing such a

"mood." It may be worth while, however, to refer in passing to Perugino's delightful "Combat of Love and Chastity" in the Louvre, with its sunny wide perspective and the harmony of young trees and youthful bodies. More curious is the landscape in some of Titian's pictures. The wild background of his "St. Jerome" is obvious enough; but in his "Venus" at the Prado the repetition of the vertical organ pipes, the avenue of trees, and the relation of the gurgling fountain to the harmonious organ music seem almost carried beyond legitimate ends.

From his epoch onward the evolution of the Turner-esque mind becomes possible. We have now not only a landscape pure and simple, but we have also a linking up of human sentiment and landscape mood. But the real Turner-landscape in general, and the "Téméraire" in particular, depend on the representation of the sea and the sun. Not a symbolic generalisation of a sun disc and of water, but an illusion of both.

It is on record that Willem van de Velde the younger, the brilliant painter of "Marines," was the origin of Turner's fondness for painting

ships, seas, and skies. The particular picture which caused this was, as we read in Thornbury, "a green mezzotinto, a Van de Velde, an upright; a single large vessel running before the wind and bearing up bravely against the waves." "This made me a painter," Turner exclaimed to a friend, whilst turning over a portfolio and pointing out this green mezzotinto to him. Van de Velde was the first real marine painter, but he never painted the sun; and we will leave him for the moment in order to investigate the origin of "sun" painting first.

Until Turner had seen and studied Claude, he never apparently thought of painting a sun in any of his pictures.

That in itself is sufficiently curious; but what seems still more so is the fact that until Claude himself had painted the sun no one else had done so; as Ruskin says, "He (Claude) effected a revolution in Art. This revolution consisted mainly in setting the sun in heaven. \*Till Claude's time no one had seriously thought of painting the sun but conventionally." The assertion is a little too sweeping perhaps, for although the little lump of gold, representing

the sun in Gentile da Fabriano's "Flight into Egypt," in the Predella of his "Adoration of the Magi," is an improvement on the Egyptian and Greek conception, the sun in Dirck Bout's landscape with St. Christopher is a serious attempt to solve a practically impossible problem. Much more advanced is Altdorfer's brilliant sun in his "Alexander and Darius" picture, where a wonderfully agitated sky, and a victoriously triumphing Day-Star forebodes, quite in Turner's style, Alexander's battle and victory over Darius. However wonderful the painting of the sky and the sun is in itself there is nevertheless an absence of real observation as regards the whole of the picture. One feels that Altdorfer was not yet capable of uniting the two parts of his picture into one visual whole.

It seems to me, therefore, that if it can be shown that the painting of ships, sky, and water in a picture was caused by the study of Van de Velde, and the painting of the sun through the study of Claude, and if it can further be shown that "Marines" and "the Sun" came into the painter's reach at a certain time, and not before, it is proved that the evolution of the

Turneresque mind is fastened to an absolutely defined period, and it so happens that we can fasten it upon one name, and that a comparatively little-known one,—Paul Bril's to wit.

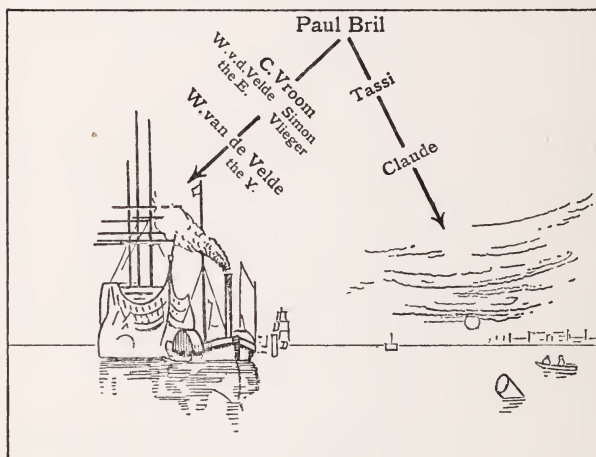
### XIII

PAUL BRIL has been called the Father of landscape painting—he is one of its many fathers, and this claim rests principally on the fact that he painted, on a large scale, landscapes in which the human element was only *staffage*, but he painted these in Rome—a fact of utmost significance.

Paul Bril of Antwerp had in Rome amongst his pupils Hendric Cornelis Vroom, who in his turn has been styled “The Father of Marine Pictures.” This Vroom (whose pictorial vision was infinitely below Van de Velde’s, though his draughtsmanship was good), on returning to the north passed some time at Haarlem, and must have influenced there Willem van de Velde the elder, and Simon Vlieger, the former the father, and both the teachers of Willem van de Velde the younger, himself

—across a century or more—the teacher of Turner.

Paul Bril had also amongst his pupils one Agostino Tassi, likewise a landscape-painter—Turner himself possessed an example of his



work. This Tassi had a pupil and that was Claude le Lorrain.

Bril's picture, facing this page, displays all the elements of Turner's Art in a comparatively chaotic state, but one can without difficulty recognise not only the beginnings of the Dutch "Marines," but also, and perhaps more clearly, the inception of the Claudesque and Turner-esque attitude towards nature.





LANDSCAPE WITH SHIPPING.

After the Painting by Paul Brill.



In Paul Bril, then, "who reformed his style after studying Titian," and who made a study of sunlight—in Paul Bril the two lines converge, and he therefore may be deemed the actual starting-point, if not of the whole of Turner's Art most certainly of his greatest works, this picture among them. And not merely the possibly accidental fact that Turner's two masters were the indirect pupils of Paul Bril makes the origin of the Turneresque attitude attachable to this particular epoch in Art. A certain Biblical miracle had suddenly become a scientific fact: the sun stood still. How many thousands all over civilised Europe must have lifted in daily amazement their eyes to the newly enthroned day-star, now no longer a mere satellite of the earth. "In the spring of 1611 Galileo visited Rome and exhibited in the Gardens of the Quirinal Palace the telescopic wonders of the heavens to the most eminent personages at the Pontifical Court," where Paul Bril was employed. In 1616 Galileo's proposition that the sun is immovable in the centre of the world was characterised as "absurd in philosophy and formally heretical." From this we can not only imagine the war of

words that must have raged round this vexed question of ecclesiastical dogma everywhere, but also the concomitant scientific and objective interest which the sun must have raised in everybody's mind. As a matter of fact, the year 1600 marks an epoch in painting, because from about this time painters began to tackle pictorial representation as a problem of light. Looking at Caravaggio's, Ribera's, and other pictures of the time, one feels that the source of all light had obliterated the appreciation of nearly all other qualities in Art hitherto considered essential. If the paintings of this epoch are not looked upon as attempts to solve light problems they lose very considerable interest—and indeed bygone historians have had nothing but contempt for what they esteemed as decadence. And yet had it not been for Caravaggio and his circle we would have lost the light-thinker Velasquez and the light-poet Rembrandt, the former through Ribera, the latter through Lastman and Elsheimer,<sup>1</sup> directly connected with Rome and its artistic and scientific influence.

<sup>1</sup> Some of Elsheimer's lamplight and moonlight pictures suggest copies *after* Rembrandt.

These questions deserve a separate and special study and treatment, but it is at least worth noting here that Galileo's "personal taste would have led him to choose painting as a profession," and that he is known to have exerted some influence on celebrated painters of his day.

In any case, therefore, even if it had not been through Bril's instrumentality, it is certain that the Claudesque and the Turneresque mind was "incubated" in Rome on the threshold of the seventeenth century.

Now there is in the case of Van de Velde and Claude and Turner not an immediate link, and although Turner himself warrants our calling the two older painters his masters, there is yet a gap of a century or more which somehow has to be bridged and accounted for.

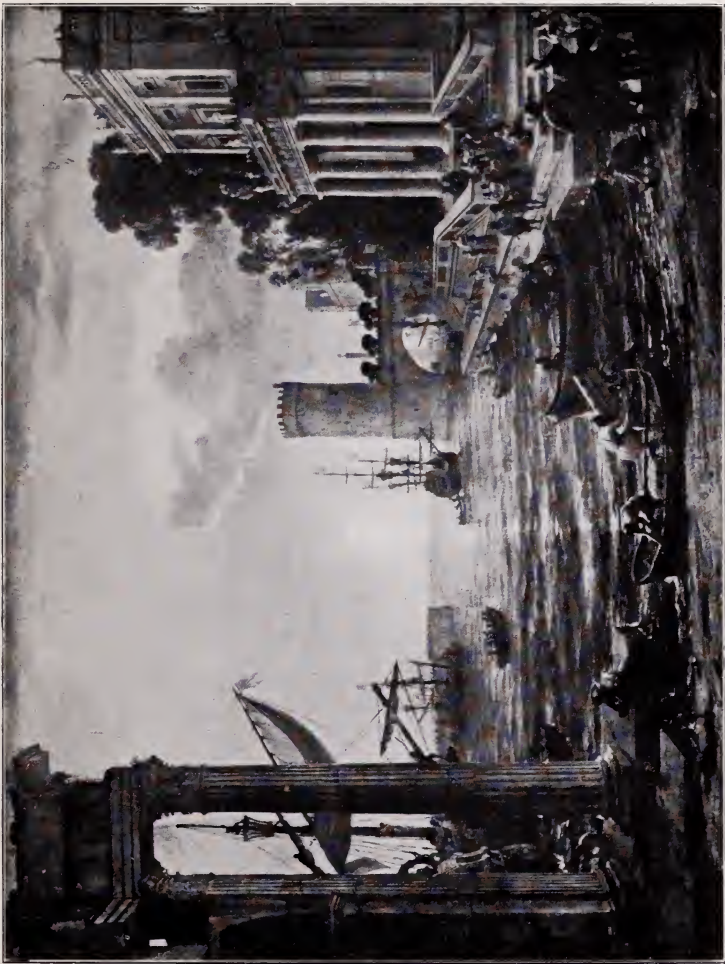
One should have thought that Turner, the painter of gorgeous, glittering sunlight, would have been drawn to the great day-star as naturally as a moth to the candle. Not so! True, one of his earliest oil-paintings is a moonlight, but the "Sunlight period" did not begin—until the foreign nobles were forced by

the French enemy to dispose of their "Claudes" in order to raise money for the imposts of war, and sold them mostly to England, thus being the immediate cause of Sir George Beaumont's successful Claude worship. Nettled by Sir George's incontinent praise of the Lorrainer, Turner determined to prove to him and the world that he could do as well or better than the French master.

Without this artificial stimulus Turner might still have developed into a great painter, but it is, to say the least, extremely doubtful whether he could and would have conceived the "Fighting Téméraire" and his other Sun pictures in the manner known to us to-day. On the other hand, it is equally possible that without the direction given to his art indirectly by Sir George Beaumont, Turner might have come to grief altogether. Turner's nature craved for the colour of light; if then—prompted to pursue the brown paintings so much praised at that time<sup>1</sup>—his eyes had not been opened through Claude to the Glory of Sunlight, he might have caused a rift in his

<sup>1</sup> Sir George used to say, "A good picture like a good fiddle should be brown."





SEAPORT WITH FIGURES.

After the Painting by Claude Gellée, called Le Lorrain.

*Face page 62.*





own lute, he might have been forced to commit the suicide of his artistic ego.

Such men as Sir George Beaumont are enormous factors in the progress of the arts, both intentionally and accidentally. Sir George's name is indelibly linked with some of the most illustrious names of the period. We find the lion's footprints along the life-paths of Wilson, Girtin, Constable, Wilkie, and Wordsworth and Byron—as a patron and friend to all but the last.

A mediocre painter himself, a man of great wealth, "tall and good-looking, with polished manners and gentle address," he was an ideal patron of art, an exceptionally acceptable leader of taste. Such a man, indeed, is quite a concentrated solution of the Hodge-Jones elixir; or rather he is a very *deus ex machina*, without whom many a comedy would turn into a lightless tragedy.

To Sir George Beaumont, in fact, is largely due the opportunity we have of seeing this picture in the National Gallery, because he was instrumental in bringing the foundation of that institution about.

Another link between Turner and Claude was of course Richard Wilson, the neglected; so that the Claude influence would be doubly accounted for.

The link between Turner and Van de Velde is somewhat easier to explain. Both Van de Veldes, father and son, actually lived and painted in England, having been called to this country by the British monarchs of their time. Willem van de Velde the younger was the painter, the other was principally a draughtsman; and the former's work was very numerous, and extensively reproduced, often in "green mezzotinto," and would, perhaps, from this very fact attract the attention even of the less artistically educated. Whilst England could boast of the inimitable Gainsborough by the side of Wilson as a landscape painter, there was no British painter of Marines whom Turner could have accepted as a master. Turner's tendencies would naturally, therefore, drive him into Van de Velde's magnificent Art. But even in this case an artificial stimulus was given, it appears, owing to the purchase by the Duke of Bridgewater of Van de Velde's 'Raising of the Gale,' which Turner very



THE SALUTE.

After the Painting by Willem van de Velde the younger.

*Face page 64.*



successfully rivalled with his "Marine View," both now at Bridgewater House.

Thus the origin of the "Fighting Téméraire" is so far perhaps not unsatisfactorily accounted for.

## XIV

THE next point which should be elucidated, if possible, is why Turner became a painter of landscapes in preference to other subjects.

Again, there are two reasons, or at least probabilities, for his particular line of evolution.

Turner, we know, was the son of the proverbial "poor but honest" parents. The problem of earning his livelihood must have confronted him at a very early age. Indeed, we find the boy, perhaps only twelve or thirteen years old, earning a living by putting back-grounds, foregrounds, and skies into architects' drawings. That would make him familiar with landscape work, and might further commend itself as a matter of business to him, on account of the demand existing just at that time for the topographical works on English counties and country seats. In that case,

Turner would merely be following the line of least resistance, irrespective of his personal inclinations.

That, however, these personal inclinations happened to coincide with the force of circumstance we may glean from many descriptions of Turner's personality and character. There are, I think, very good psychological grounds for Turner's evolution as a landscape painter.

"In spite of his clear little blue<sup>1</sup> eyes, his small hands and feet," says Monkhouse, "his appearance was not likely to prepossess women." "The unprepossessing exterior, the reserve, the austerity of language existed in Turner, in combination with a powerful, intelligent, reflective mind, ever coiled up within itself"—such is Mr. Cyrus Redding's description of Turner, mentioned by Thornbury. If we add to this a trait of lower-middle-class parsimony, almost niggardliness, we can well understand that he was not likely to "prepossess women." "He never had a fair chance"—I quote Monkhouse again—"of acquiring in his youth

<sup>1</sup> They were presumably bluish grey, as contemporary statements differ.

more than a traveller's knowledge of his own language, and so his mind had a very small outlet, through the ordinary channels of speech ; on the other hand, faculties of drawing and composition were trained to the utmost. . . ."

Such a man is naturally driven into solitude for the harmony and peace of his mind, and into mean streets and queer haunts for the satisfaction of his social needs. Turner, conscious of his natural handicap, his unprepossessing self, his lack of education, of *savoir vivre* and *savoir faire*, would feel at home neither in a light-hearted "Quartier latin" atmosphere nor in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy. On the other hand, lonely rambles with sketchbook and pencil, lonely labour in a secluded studio, coupled with a delight in ships and shipmen, in "Grog at Offley's," pints at "The Yorkshire Stingo," and the unsophisticated charms of "Mrs. Booth's" were more in accordance with the complexion of his mentality.

These seem to me, then, two perfectly simple and therefore probable reasons for Turner's development into a landscape-painter, and very similar reasons have weighed with



other landscape-painters, many of whom have been uneducated, unprepossessing, and more or less socially disappointed men.

It remains to discover, if we can, what made Turner a painter at all. As for everything else there must be at least two reasons for this, one of which is happily recorded.

The house in which Turner's father, the barber, followed his occupation, stood in Hand Court, Maiden Lane, which at that time seems to have been one of the main approaches to Covent Garden Theatre; I base my account on Thornbury, who is never tired of following side tracks—to very good purpose, I think. In virtue of its position Turner's father could claim amongst his customers numbers of influential men, with whom, no doubt, he became acquainted, barber-fashion. In Maiden Lane was likewise at that time the printshop of the great John Raphael Smith, the engraver and printseller, who no doubt displayed his wares in the windows of his shop, in order to attract his patrons. Amongst his customers was a certain Mr. Tomkinson, "a rich silversmith with a smattering taste for Art." This Mr. Tomkinson became a customer of Turner's

father, who seems to have been in the habit of attending him at his private residence. To this most trivial circumstance we owe Mr. Tomkinson a debt of profound gratitude: for it was at his house that Turner's slumbering genius awoke.

Mr. Tomkinson was, fortunately, either a snob who "having grown rich was ambitious to bear arms," or possibly a genuine "gentleman" entitled to have his arms emblazoned upon any article of his property. Now it is related how Turner, the boy of some five years, was allowed to accompany his father one day to Mr. Tomkinson's house, and that he there, in Mr. Tomkinson's room, beheld, to his delight, a silver salver on which was emblazoned a beautiful heraldic design consisting mainly of a fierce heraldic lion, presumably *passant gardant* and the rest of it. Mightily impressed, he rushes home and spends the afternoon in reproducing what he has seen, even as in after life he watches, mightily impressed, sunset, snowdrift, or storm, goes home, and seeks to record there what he has seen.

This lion, his first effort, apparently so pleased his father that he there and then made

up his mind to foster his boy's talent, and to allow him to become a painter.

At any rate, this is the substance of the Tomkinson anecdote.

Now many will feel inclined to ridicule the idea that there is any connection between the Tomkinson lion and the "Téméraire," will consider even the Tomkinson incident wholly irrelevant, and that if it had not been Tomkinson's lion, it might have been any one's ass or Mrs. Turner's best teapot. It might certainly; but the point is that it happens to have been the Tomkinson lion, the aristocratic association of which would probably appeal to old Turner more forcibly than a less genteel object, and would consequently dispose him more favourably towards the leanings of his son. Trivial incidents would not so obviously influence the mature mind; but in early youth and adolescence circumstance, or as in that case it is usually called, "environment," is everything. Suppose the Turner seedling had grown up in the country, in the shadow of an "unlicked" barbarian of the irate and bullying farmer-father type, is it really so obvious that talent like truth "will out"?

Was it not Frith who, during the Ruskin-Whistler case, openly declared that it had been a mere "toss-up" whether he became a painter or an architect (upon which Whistler marginally commented: "He must have tossed up")? With strong obstacles in the path of his artistic career, a man like Turner, who admittedly was "led in the chains of circumstance," might have, with his equally strong love of river, sea, and shipping, easily drifted into a sailor's life: his private conduct seems certainly to point that way.

## XV

As to the second reason for Turner's evolving into an *artist* I am not able to do more than just hint at the direction in which we must search in order to discover its hiding-place.

Genius has been called inspiration, and by inspiration is usually meant a "divine afflatus," something that comes from without and plays upon the human instrument as the wind might sing in an Æolian harp. Viewed in this light Turner becomes in the eyes of many a dual personality, a sort of Jekyll and Hyde, a divine artist and a sordid man who "on a Saturday night would put by his work, slip a five-pound note into his pocket, button it securely up there, and set off to some low sailors' house in Wapping or Rotherhithe." But instead of the "Hyde" part of Turner being the enemy of

his "Dr. Jekyll" equivalent, we must rather consider that his genius, as made manifest in his art, is dependent absolutely on the other part of his nature.

"So far as concerns the entire compass of our feelings or emotions, it is the universal testimony of mankind," says Bain,<sup>1</sup> "that these have no independent spiritual subsistence, but are in every case embodied in our fleshly form." Further, "as to the influence of bodily changes on mental states, we have such facts as the dependence of our feelings and moods upon hunger, repletion, the state of the stomach, fatigue and rest, pure and impure air, cold and warmth, stimulants and drugs, bodily injuries, disease, sleep, advancing years. These influences extend not merely to the grosser modes of feeling, and to such familiar exhibitions as after-dinner oratory, but also the *highest emotions of the mind*—love, anger, *æsthetic feeling*, and moral sensibility. Bodily affliction is often the cause of a local change in the moral nature." And lastly, he says: "Hence the mental tone depends no less upon the vigorous condition of the purifying organs

<sup>1</sup> Bain's *Mind and Body*.

—lungs, liver, intestines, kidneys, skin—than upon the presence of nutritive material obtained from the food.”

— If this means anything it means that we owe the art of Turner as much to his body as to his mind, as much to his virtues as to his vices. But do let us beware from relying too much on this union of body and mind; or at least from drawing wrong conclusions, in arguing, perhaps, that if his body had been better cared for, and if his mind had developed in better surroundings, his art would have been greater. As to that we know nothing—it would have been different, or it might not have developed at all. We can never be sure that the strengthening of one side will not weaken another, that removing the cause of an evil we may not be withdrawing a support from something which we consider good.

Thus Ruskin complains of “. . . the waste of time during (Turner’s) youth in painting subjects of no interest whatever; parks, villas . . . and in later years meaningless compositions.” Ruskin, as a matter of fact, regrets that Turner is the Turner that he was; because he thinks the Turner, as he wished him, would



have been greater or better. Criticism of this kind is based upon the unwarranted assumption that there is a known standard of absolute excellence which artists ought to "live up to."

It may be that there is really such an abstract, absolute standard, but if there is it must for ever be hidden from the human mind, which knows only relative values. Therefore all art criticism, except between teacher and pupil, or master and man, or patron and artist, is futile, since only in such cases is the criticised placed in just and logical relation to the critic.

Every critic is consequently likely to find himself as hopelessly wrong as Ruskin, who had that sort of ideal standard in his mind. "... For those palladian and classical buildings which he had been taught to admire being wholly devoid of interest (*i.e.* in Ruskin's opinion), and in their formality and barrenness (*i.e.* in Ruskin's view) unmanageable, he was obliged (thinks Ruskin) to make them manageable in his pictures by (what Ruskin calls) disguising them, and to use all kinds of playing shadows and glittering lights to hide their ugly detail (as Ruskin thinks); and as in their best state (Ruskin continues) such buildings are



white and colourless (there is no colourless white except in abstract theory), he associated the idea of whiteness (thinks Ruskin) with perfect architecture generally, and (*teste* Ruskin) was confused and puzzled when he found it grey."

Now even if we had heard this account from Turner's own lips, we should be forced to discredit it. Turner, who had himself confessed that he would rather have become an architect, is here assumed to have been insensible to fine architecture, and to have used playing shadows and glittering lights to *obscure ugly details*.

To begin with, architecture cannot be rendered pictorially in the same manner as architecturally—it is an absolute impossibility—except in black and white, or such neutral treatment as is tantamount to an architectural and therefore diagrammatical design. The colour and tone element which naturally plays round a building plays havoc with detail—architectural or other. The "Fighting Téméraire," a subject in every way after Turner's own heart, is "disguised" in precisely the same manner; but surely not in order to obscure "ugly detail," for let it not be said that Turner could not draw minute detail, could

not define sharply when he desired to do so. Correspondingly, for instance, the Whistler of the Battersea Bridge is the Whistler of the minutely wrought etchings, and the Velasquez of the loosely painted "Philip IV.'s Head" is the Velasquez of the tight, early full-length of the same monarch.

Ruskin's misjudgment—for misjudgment it surely is—came of his mental attitude. "He thinks too much—such men are dangerous." Where Turner *feels*—*on peint avec le sentiment*, as Chardin used to say—Ruskin *thinks*. An object of vision would start a train of thought in Ruskin's mind, whilst in Turner's it would cause a wave of emotion—quite a different thing. Turner was badly, Ruskin well educated; and had thus many pretty bricks to build his structures of thought with. Turner, on the contrary, behaved as a painter even in Ruskin's own judgment should: he does not *think*—he is *moved*. A Gothic cathedral might consequently supply us with pages of book-wisdom in Ruskin's, with a mere dab of bright pigment in Turner's work. Both are in such cases right, only the one should not apply his criticism to the other.

## XVI

It may, perhaps, some day be explained physiologically why Turner's mind responded mainly to light and colour to such a degree that he ended by substituting colour for shade, by sacrificing shade, and consequently what is commonly called form. Possibly the clue will be found in the specific nature of his mother's insanity. This physiological peculiarity of Turner's brain carried him to go a step farther than the so-called "old masters" in that he, "instead of trying to make the sun look bright, by surrounding it with darkness, has made it look brighter by surrounding it with brightness."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as was already discovered by Brunet, "the light key of colour of the modern school owes its origin to Turner."

Turner's "colour," which was, however, not

<sup>1</sup> Mr. G. Storey according to Thornbury.

an objective, not a "scientific" study of natural hues, but rather an intuitive rendering of its emotional qualities, may or may not have been partly due to a pathological affection of his optic organs, but it certainly was quite different from anything that had gone before, and bears, it seems to me, comparison only with the strongly expressed individuality of El Greco's Art.

"Pigment," says Grant Allen, "stands in the same relation to the natural taste for colour as sugar to the natural taste for sweetness, or artificial essences to the natural taste for perfume."<sup>1</sup> The artist who is in the happy position to create things for which he has such natural taste, will equally naturally, *i.e.* if left to himself and not influenced by other considerations, choose his palette according to his taste, provided always that he is either sufficiently *naïf* or sufficiently technically advanced to manipulate pigments with freedom. In other words, in order to gratify his optic senses he will gratify them. This is by no means a tautology, as there is to-day a school of thought in art, which, in order to gratify its natural per-

<sup>1</sup> *The Colour Sense*, Triibner, 1879, p. 243.

versity, denies gratification to its natural senses and rejoices in this painful performance. They are as truly artistic as the Flagellants were religious.

With Turner there is ample proof that he gratified his senses in every way, as much as all his circumstances would permit him to do so. Moreover, his colour-sense was peculiarly unsophisticated,—commonplace, a modern *anti*-post-impressionist might call it.

“On one occasion he was particularly struck by his friend Jones’s blue waistcoat, and its contrast with a red scarf worn underneath. ‘I like that, Joney,’ said Turner, ‘good bit of colour, Joney’; and soon after he appeared in the same effect in dress.”<sup>1</sup>

The palpable contrast of hot and cold! An Ojibway Indian could appreciate this pet theory of Turner’s, and a bull is not even insensible to the fascination of the warmer of the two pigments.

<sup>1</sup> Thornbury, new ed., 1897, p. 392.

## XVII

THERE is, no doubt, a psycho-physiological explanation for Turner's colour-sympathies, which is the key to Turner's palette. There is, however, at the same time, a purely accidental or objective reason for Turner's colours, viz. the state of colour-chemistry at his period; and how much of the charm and fascination of the Old Masters does not depend on the chemical changes wrought by time in the pigments and vehicles and preservatives of the paint, and how many more modern works have not suffered irreparable damage on account of bad pigments or injudicious mixing.

There are passages in the sky of the "Téméraire" which have become brown owing to such chemical changes, and the sea, too, has suffered so that in looking at it to-day

we observe "flat" notes; the majesty of the melody is marred.

The pigments Turner used are still preserved, but, so far as I know, have not yet been analysed. From the invaluable Thornbury we may, however, glean much interesting information given to him by eye-witnesses. Thus Mr. Trimmer found in Turner's studio at his death: "Cobalt, ultra-marine of various depths," "smalts of various intensities, some verditer, blanc d'argent, and flake white, a large bottle of chrome; gamboge, rose madder; old bladders of raw umber and other dark earths." We know, further, that Turner introduced Prussian blues into his skies "as nearer nature," and that he also used orange vermilion and emerald green, apart from many other well-known pigments he must have employed, such as vermilion, and different blacks, etc.

Now the pigments may properly be compared to the notes of a musical instrument. Thus the simple and elementary colours—earth and vegetable, such as vermilion (cinabar), ultramarine, yellow ochre, white (bole), and black (either vegetable or ivory) would correspond to a primitive five-stringed lute,



and we can expect only simple harmonies from it. As in music, so also the painter's colour-notes have from the homogeneous changed into the heterogeneous, from the simple to the complex. Turner's epoch began with the spinet and ended with the grand piano. Turner himself had more pigments to paint with than the old masters. Burnet states: "He was born, too, in a time of much chemical change in the manufacture of pigments, and all new colours he daringly used, whether chrome yellow, emerald green, or cobalt blue."

Chrome was, according to *Webster's Dictionary*, discovered actually in 1819; cobalt, according to the same authority, "is the name now (1835) appropriated to the improved blue prepared with metallic cobalt"; the metal itself having been discovered in 1733. Prussian blue, Webster tells us, was called so "from being accidentally discovered by Diesbach, a colour-maker, in Berlin in 1704, and announced as a pigment in the Berlin *Miscellanies* for 1710."

Here, then, are at least two really important new colours absent from Rubens's or Titian's or Botticelli's palette; as was the orange vermilion "first prepared by Field at the



desire of Sir Thomas (Lawrence), and with it he (Turner) was much pleased."

It would, of course, be absurd to argue that Turner was a greater colourist than Titian because he used more pigments, or that Mozart was only a minor composer compared with Richard Strauss because he had a more restricted orchestra: but at the same time the actual timbre of both musical and pictorial composition is naturally influenced for better or for worse. The effect of the "Fighting Téméraire" is materially dependent on the actual pigments which Turner had at his disposal. In giving a painter credit for any peculiar brilliancy of colour or subtlety of gradation let us not forget that somewhere, however low down in the scale, those must rank who discovered, who "fetched and carried" his pigments for him. Similarly, one might discuss the vehicles used by him, the painting grounds, the very canvas, and last, not least, the frame—for even the easel picture died with classic antiquity, and was resurrected during the Renaissance.

## XVIII

WE have now touched upon every important point in Turner's picture. We have found its popularity due to its patriotic sentiment, and the strong and sensual appeal of sunsets. We have discovered that the suggestion of the subject came to him owing to the mere chance of meeting the "Téméraire" on the river, whilst he was going to Greenwich in a boat in company with other artists. We have realised both the pictorial and purely emotional appeal of the subject, we have dwelt on the fact that the attraction of the picture lies, to a very great extent, in the shape of the "Téméraire" itself, in contrast with the puny steam tug. We have satisfied ourselves that so far as Turner is concerned, the painting of the constituent parts of the whole, *i.e.* the sky and sun, the water and ships, can definitely be traced

back to his artistic forerunners. We have accounted for the existence of the Turneresque attitude of mind at a given epoch, from the point of view of Art history. We have traced, historically, the cause of Turner's art, and endeavoured at least to show how he, constitutionally, became a painter in general, and a landscape-painter in particular. We have had to make a few observations on the psycho-physiological causes that underlay his career as an artist ; and have, lastly, given his dependence on the mechanical means at his disposal some thought.

Wherever we have "tapped" the "Fighting Téméraire" we have always found channels leading deep down into history and mystery of human existence. (As a result Turner emerges, not as a divine creator who could fashion a world out of nothing, but a superbly gifted builder who arranged the products of other hands and other minds in such a manner as to represent to our minds a new product, a new edifice, which, however, in its turn has served others as a foundation ; even as the bud of yester-year is the necessary premiss for the blossom of to-day.)

If there has been any trace of Turner's individuality in this exposition of the origin of the "Fighting Téméraire," it has surely been his manner of suppressing facts, for all the facts the painter has expressed are reducible to outside influences. Not what is stated, but what is left out, circumscribes Turner's genius. Many painters, ancient and modern, record the facts they observe with the conscientiousness of an auctioneer making the inventory of a valuable estate; they put down everything they find. Such manner of recording does their industry credit, and in certain phases of art, their intelligence too; but the great master has always left out more than he has put in, has suggested more than he has stated—from Fra Angelico to Michelangelo, and from Rembrandt to Turner.

We might, then, with some justification, consider this power of suggestion the "real presence" of Turner's individuality—the innermost significance of his personality.

Nevertheless, this "leaving out" is comparable to the handwriting of a practised hand, which places conventional symbols of definite shape in such a manner on the paper that,

though half of the form be lost, the preservation of the essentials makes the meaning of the script more or less perfectly clear. From the manner in which such setting down is executed we deduce the writer's "style," which is, originally, simply his penmanship. This penmanship is as much due to the muscles of the fingers as to the cells of the brain ; and according as these will let him he will set his characters down.

Very similarly the master-hand wields his brush and pigments according to the capacities of his mind and muscles,—it is an unconscious expression of his personality. If such unconscious expression be aped by another it is degraded to a mask—a *persona* without personality.

## XIX

WE have now reached a vital question. It is generally admitted, as we have seen, that the highest Art is an unconscious expression of the painter's self, it is not a result of thought. Ruskin goes even so far as to say, "if he (the artist) thought, he would instantly go wrong." That is, of course, not quite true; the artist *does* think, though his thoughts are concerned in finding the best means of realising what he feels; that is to say, whilst he remains unconscious of the reason for his emotion he is yet intent upon devising means to reproduce it. He does not set up a canon of "beauty" in the abstract; if he did so he would certainly "instantly go wrong."

Now, I would beg the reader to follow me upon a certain line of investigation, though he may not at first appreciate its relevancy.

We have all heard of the wonderful bower-birds of the Australian region, who are in the habit of building arbours, which have nothing whatever to do with their nests, but apparently are in some way connected with their courtship. These bowers are built differently by the different kinds of bower-birds, but generally consist of arches or semi-domes constructed of twigs or stems of flowers, and decorated in various ways with all sorts of bright and coloured objects, such as flowers, parrots' feathers, shells, bleached bones, and in captivity tufts of coloured wools, etc.

The ingenuity in the construction of such bowers is wonderful.

The spotted bower-bird (*Chlamydodera maculata*), according to Mr. John Lea, in his *Romance of Bird Life*, builds its arbour in the following manner :—

“ Its arbour, like that of the satin-bird, has the form of an avenue, but it is two or three feet long, and is built on a different principle. In the first place, instead of making a platform of sticks to support the walls, these birds, like ourselves, prefer underground foundation, and dig a trench on each side in which they plant



the ends of their sticks, so as to form an arched walk. Then they line the walls with tall grasses, so disposed that their heads nearly meet, and cleverly kept in their places by stones placed on the ends of the stems along the floor of the avenue. At each end the stones diverge from the entrance, so as to form a little path on either side. . . . Mr. North discovered bowers in which the birds' originality and inventive genius had led them to construct a second arch over the middle of the first one by continuing the upward curve of twigs. . . ."

We have here, then, evidence that these birds are not only capable of thought, but even of creative construction. As to the interior decoration of such bowers Mr. Lea says:—

"The handsome regent bower-bird (*Sericulus melinus*), whose bower is very much like that of the satin-bird, gives evidence of much artistic taste, using berries of several kinds and colours, young shoots of pinkish tint, and freshly gathered leaves for the adornment of the play-house. . . . Mr. Lumholtz describes how on one of his excursions amidst a dense scrub on a mountain top his attention was



attracted by the loud and unceasing voice of a bird. On approaching the spot whence the sound proceeded he found a modest little grey bird, about the size of a thrush, the *Scenopæus dentirostris*. The bird had been neatly arranging a number of large fresh leaves side by side on the black soil, and was singing happily over his work. . . . 'On this occasion,' Mr. Lumholtz writes, 'I saw three such places of amusement, all near one another, and all had fresh leaves from the same kind of trees, while a large heap of dry withered leaves was lying close by. It seems that the bird scrapes away the mould every time it changes the leaves, so as to have a dark background, against which the green leaves make a better appearance. Can any one doubt that this bird has the sense of beauty? . . .'

"Mr. Wallace thought that there was no good reason for believing that birds take any delight in colour for its own sake; according to his view a bower-bird would only rejoice in bright berries because they are often good to eat.<sup>1</sup> But the spotted bower-bird and the regent bird collect berries merely to play with, to

<sup>1</sup> See on this Grant Allen's *Colour*.

carry about and to arrange and rearrange amongst the twigs of the bower ; and the case is even stronger in favour of the gardener-birds, which gather not only berries but bright orchids and other beautiful flowers, which they use in making for themselves lovely gardens, with merry lawns and the most delightful little summer-house you could imagine. . . .”

One could continue these examples of bird architecture and decoration. This may, however, suffice to show that these birds have certain problems to solve, that they occasionally alter the design of their architecture, not only according to their kind, but also individually ; and lastly, that they use many differently shaped and coloured objects, and arrange them in various ways—for purposes of decoration. It stands to reason that they must both feel and think, and think pretty clearly, for the twigs with which they build will not of themselves stick in the ground, nor will they bend the right way, of their own accord. It must be a biased mind indeed who would deny them a certain kind of artistic thought, built on an underlying artistic emotion.

“In treating of the beginnings of archi-

ture," says Professor G. Baldwin Brown,<sup>1</sup> "we shall see how like it is in its inception to the work of the bower-birds, and yet how almost from the first there is apparent in the human work a striving after proportion, after a satisfying division of a whole into parts, after a rhythmical interchange of form and void, so that a progress is set on foot that never ceases till it culminates in the Greek Temple, the most perfect embodiment of the principle of 'order' in all the operations of the Arts. The birds can join piece to piece but cannot space things at intervals; they can accumulate, but cannot distribute; adorn, but cannot decorate; nor, though they may have taste to collect, can they dispose their treasures in any artistic relation to their work as a whole."

On another page, however, Professor Brown admits that "it would be too much to say that this constitutes a difference in kind between the 'play' of the animal and that of man."

The animal, compared with man, has two great disadvantages: it has no means of communicating its intellectual experiences to its fellows,

<sup>1</sup> *University Manuals*: "The Fine Arts."

and it has not the use of tools, and therefore it cannot progress, since it must solve every difficulty afresh on each occurrence, and must use the material as it finds it; it can "manufacture" as the weaver-bird does, but it cannot manufacture "tools." The difference, therefore, between an animal and man is one of degree, not of kind; it is a case of arrested development, due to unknown, though perhaps intrinsically not unknowable causes. There is no difference otherwise. The culminating point of the principle of "order," depending, as it does, on "a rhythmical interchange of form and void," on proportion, on a "satisfying" division of a whole into parts, as Professor Brown puts it, is essentially only a culmination of instincts. There is no "reason" for the satisfaction of a division of a whole into parts, there is no explanation for the "rhythm" in the interchange of form and void, or the sense of proportion. True, we may endeavour to account for these things intellectually, as we may explain colours by giving the different lengths of the light-waves; but such considerations are not present in the minds of our artists, and do not help them to create works of Art,

nor do they help us to derive pleasure from such works.

In the "Fighting Téméraire" there is on the right-hand side a dark object. Why is it there? Is there any other real explanation for its presence than a purely instinctive one? It represents a buoy, and the "realist" may argue that it was actually there in the real scene before Turner's eyes. That dark object—buoy or no buoy—present in the real scene before Turner's eye, or not, is at any rate the making of the picture artistically. The dark spot, in the foreground, and in exactly the place in which it is painted, holds the whole composition together. Without the dark spot, just there, where it is, the picture would look unfinished—it would fall to pieces. In the same way a Japanese artist can turn a piece of rush matting, with the aid of some coloured spot, meaning nothing in particular, into a work of art.

What, after all, is the "sense of order" but the instinct which likes to see the right thing in the right place? As to what the *right* thing and the *right* place is depends on circumstances, and depends artistically, at any rate, on "feeling."

The bower-bird feels that the right place for a gay parrot's feather is somewhere within its bower—Titian felt that the right spot, and the right attitude, and the right colour for his "Bacchus" was where we now see it. Chardin could do wonders with a piece of broken nutshell, or a bit of loose string—all wholly and solely by instinct. There is no canon which could be applied, or rather none for which a reason can be given.

On this question of "feeling" we are absolutely on the same path as the animals; we have gone farther, we are a few rungs higher up the ladder, perhaps, *i.e.* we are not differently but more developed.

## XX

THE greatest possession of an artist is, then, not what he can learn, but what he feels instinctively. If one examines the "Téméraire," making due allowance for its deterioration in colour, one is constantly reminded of his wonderful, unfailing instinct for the pictorially beautiful. Everything seems in exactly the right place, of exactly the right shade: it is a realisation of "Order" in the highest and deepest sense of the word *KOSMOS*!

And this greatest possession of an artist, instead of being a metaphysical inspiration, is on the contrary a physiological peculiarity, which he shares with the rest of the organic and inorganic world. This craving for the realisation of Order lies rooted in the beginnings of all things, and must be identified with that mysterious power which manifests itself



to us in different guises as gravitation, electricity, chemical affinity, *Geschlechtstrieb*, since without that power no order of any kind could exist.

As to the difference between us and the artist, there is again only one of degree. In a sense every active person is an artist, if by artist we mean something akin to a poet, which the Greek language evolved from the idea of making. The artist makes something that gives him pleasure, as does the poet, and as we all try to do. We have all different ideas as to what gives us pleasure, that is why we are not all poets or all artists, but essentially there is no difference; we all want to create, at least for ourselves, something that has to us a semblance of order: be it the homely hearth, a good dinner, the drunkard's longing for his drink, the nun's perfervid desire for the heavenly bridegroom, or the Buddhist's sublime negation of all senses—Nirvanah. It is all one. Only, the artist derives his pleasure from the making of things which appear mere play to the *serious* man of affairs, though the same serious man will invest large sums in the "play" of a bygone artist.



Viewed in this light the great artist is not greater than the most insignificant amongst us ; his natural aims are the same : a craving for the satisfaction of his senses. Nor is it to his credit that such satisfaction comes to him in a different and in a rarer fashion. He has not made himself, he cannot help the peculiar action and reaction of his nervous system, which controls him as completely as it does a coolie, or, if you like, a rattlesnake.

Now let us for a moment leave our individualities behind, let us look upon the universe as we conceive it : an eternally active mass of mind-full, *i.e.* order-craving matter ; subject, so far as we know, always to at least one law, ever changing, yet never substantially altering. Every effect the offspring of a cause, and in itself cause again, and fruitful mother of other effects. Nowhere, as far as we can see, an effect without a cause ; nowhere either a free will which could from the same causes produce—*caeteris paribus*—a different effect ; no empty space between one thing and its neighbour, the elements in distant Sirian stars, ancestors or descendants, brothers or cousins, of the gyrating atomic systems in the brain-

cells of man. No room for extravagancy—all subject to a strict economy ; everything present determinable by everything past ; the slightest causes—answerable for the grandest evolutions, the greatest achievements destroyed by most insignificant causes.

Let us cast a glance, as rapidly and as broadly as we can, over some of the active agents, some of the less obvious human causes of which this “ Fighting Téméraire ” is an effect.

## XXI

TAXES on candles, salt, and soap, amongst other things, supplied Charles I. with the necessary funds for his art patronage. Had it not been for these, there would have been perhaps no rise of Art in England, and Charles I. might have kept his head. It is a nice question whether England would have been better off without iniquitous taxes and without art, or with such taxes and other grievances, and with that fine School of Painting which indirectly owes its inception to the Martyr King. At any rate, no Charles I.—no English School of Painting as we know it.

The Duke of York's little "African Gold-dust and Slave Company" was the immediate cause of the Merry Monarch's war with Holland, during which an intrepid war artist, Willem van de Velde the elder, so much

distinguished himself that the Merry Monarch invited him to come to England, and took him into his service. He came, and eventually brought his son over too, who lived in this country for many years, and died here after a busy and honourable career. This Willem van de Velde the younger's pictures made Turner, on his own confession, "a painter."

Had there been no Locke and no Newton, the "Goddess of Reason" would never have made a greater fool of herself than of poor Louis Capet, and Napoleon would not have been welcomed by a world tired of her folly, and ready, willy-nilly, to accept his yoke. Horatio, Captain Courageous of the "Agamemnon" at sea, on land an amorous sailor, like a thousand others, would not have become Lord Nelson, and the mutinous "Téméraire" would have been, if at all, not in any case the glorious companion of the "Victory." Turner would have been cheated out of his greatest, or at least most popular picture.

How the "Claudes" came to England (again the Corsican Ogre had a finger in the pie); and how their coming over inspired Bohemund's Prince of Antioch's descendant,

Sir George Beaumont, to sing their praises in and out of time, and angered Turner, and incidentally opened his eyes to the sun, we have already seen. Thus do we find the blood that fought in Robert Guiscard destroying the ancient monuments of Rome, flowing in gentle rhythm through the veins of his English descendant, and rising ecstatically as it realises the merits of the Lorrain pastry-cook.

The allurements of "Whitebait and Champagne at Greenwich" brought Turner probably face to face with the subject of this, his most popular work. A handsome Sir Thomas, "generally to be found at the well-spread tables of public bodies, or people of rank and fashion," speeding in his carriage to Montague House at Blackheath, there to spend vain-glorious days and imprudent nights, would have been blind to such visions, would have been mentally incapable to see what the eye of Turner saw.

No! "Puggy Booth," as the Chelsea urchins called him; "Admiral Booth," as he was known to the Tradesman; customer of the "Yorkshire Stingo hostelry," the worse for grog at

“Offley’s”; incoherent composer of “The Fallacies of Hope”—Turner, the incomparable colour visionary, was *the* man for this great picture.

Within the compass of these last few pages we have brought Candle taxes, Martyr Kings, Gold-dust and Slave-traffic, Merry Monarchs, Philosophers, Norman Raiders, Whitebait, Champagne and Grog, and Poetry and Painters, all into some sort of relationship—have, in fact, considered them amongst the contributing causes towards the achievements of Turner’s “Fighting Téméraire.”

Is this all then mere folly, mere random gathering of irrelevancy?

I think not.

If we postulate as we do, and have to do, a first cause in the beginning of all things, and that this first cause has had many effects, these being in themselves new causes, causing innumerable other effects and so *ad infinitum*, it follows that everything that *is* at any given moment, is there because of everything else that has happened before that moment. There is no isolation; there is no gap, no empty space in the universe; therefore, we can neither add

to nor subtract from it. If something happens to one thing, other things must necessarily be affected, and whatever is so affected again causes further changes,—that is Spencer's Law of Progress.

“Every active force produces more than one change, every cause produces more than one effect.”

Turner was a great painter because he realised for the first time in art, credibly, the sheer beauty of Sunlight; and the “Fighting Téméraire” is a great picture, because it realises for us the reverence and veneration with which the painter was wont to look upon everything that he *saw*, and seeing, *felt*. But, as Luther felt when he stood before his judges and spoke, “I cannot otherwise”; so could Turner not otherwise. The Power that guided Turner's brush was not controlled by him; he, and all of us, are its tools. We do exactly as much as it lets us do; we can neither add to the Universe, nor take from it; we can get no more into it than is there already.

An individual achievement is only an imperfect realisation of a macrocosmic phenomenon.

The “Fighting Téméraire” is no more

truly a product of individuality than the bower-bird's bower; it happened as inevitably as the Fall of Rome, and is as much to Turner's credit as the rotation of the earth upon its axis.

THE END

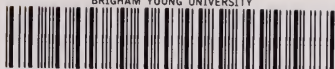






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